

3-28-2014

# Family Emotional Climate and Emotion Regulation in Relation to Mental Health of Emerging Adults

Jacqueline B. McCoy

*Indiana University - Purdue University Fort Wayne*

Scott W. Plunkett

*California State University - Northridge*

Follow this and additional works at: [http://opus.ipfw.edu/stu\\_symp2014](http://opus.ipfw.edu/stu_symp2014)



Part of the [Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

McCoy, Jacqueline B. and Plunkett, Scott W., "Family Emotional Climate and Emotion Regulation in Relation to Mental Health of Emerging Adults" (2014). 2014 IPFW Student Research and Creative Endeavor Symposium. Book 31.  
[http://opus.ipfw.edu/stu\\_symp2014/31](http://opus.ipfw.edu/stu_symp2014/31)

This Poster is brought to you for free and open access by the IPFW Student Research and Creative Endeavor Symposium at Opus: Research & Creativity at IPFW. It has been accepted for inclusion in 2014 IPFW Student Research and Creative Endeavor Symposium by an authorized administrator of Opus: Research & Creativity at IPFW. For more information, please contact [admin@lib.ipfw.edu](mailto:admin@lib.ipfw.edu).



# Family Emotional Climate and Emotion Regulation in Relation to Mental Health of Emerging Adults

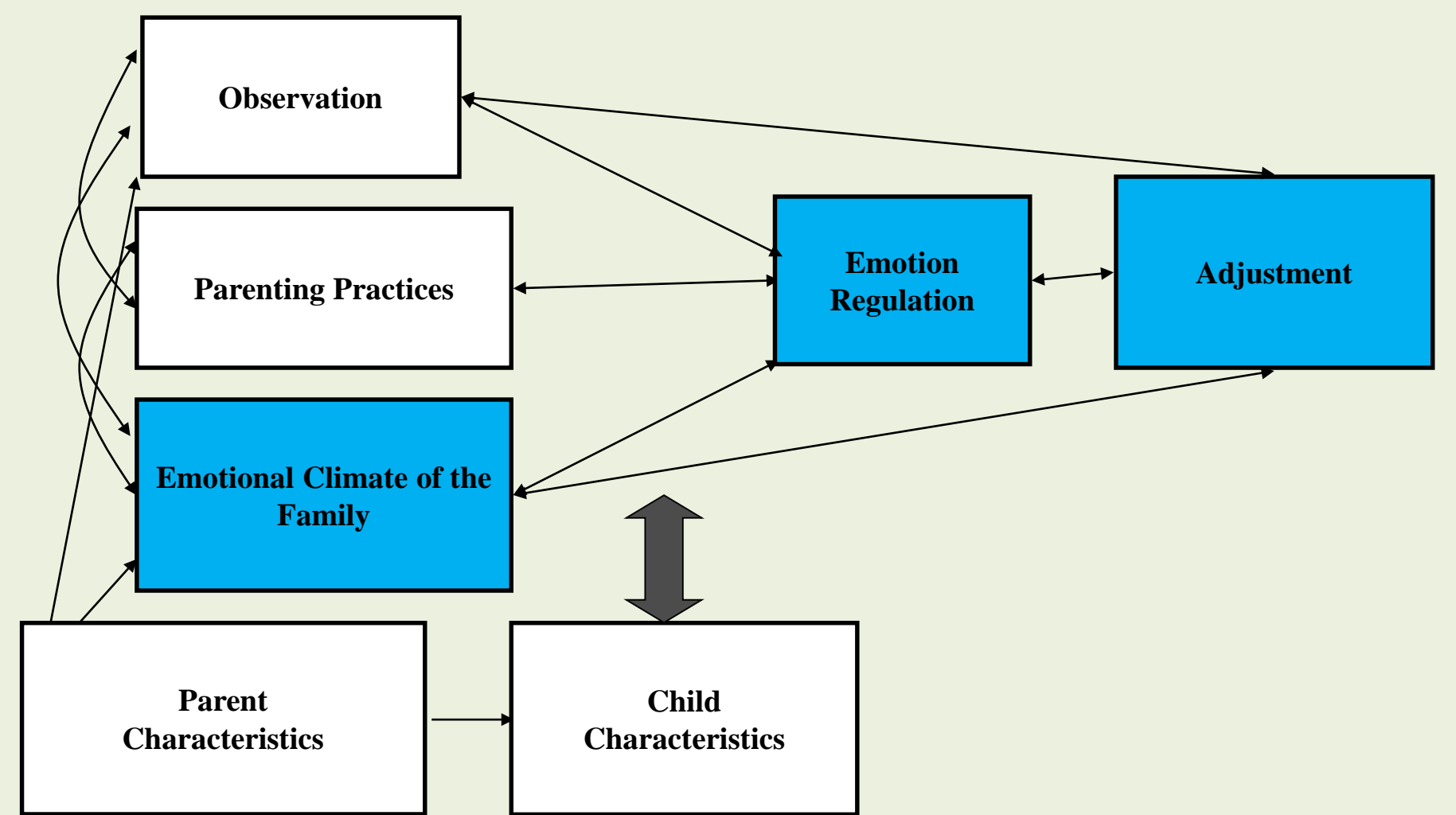
Jacqueline B. McCoy  
Benjamin J. Houlterberg, Ph.D.  
Indiana University-Purdue  
University Fort Wayne  
Scott W. Plunkett, Ph.D.  
California State University Northridge

## Introduction

- Emotion regulation is the process through which one maintains and modulates the expression, occurrence and intensity of emotions.
- Emotion reactivity is the tendency to react to stressors with high degrees of emotional liability, including anger, irritability, and frustration.
- The family system’s perspective posits families consist of multiple subsystems, each of which affects and is affected by the processes of other subsystems within the family.
- However, there has been little investigation of the underlying mechanisms by which the family emotional climate is related to individual mental health outcomes in emerging adults.

## The Current Study

- The current study examined the role of emotion regulation processes (e.g. regulation, reactivity) in explaining the link between the family emotional climate (e.g. interparental conflict styles) and mental health indicators in an emerging adult sample.



from Morris, A.S., Silk, J.S., Steinberg, L., Myers, S.S., & Robinson, L.R. (2007).

## Methods



### Participants

- N= 755 emerging adults (73.2% female), Mean age = 20.31
- 46% Hispanic/ Latino, 18 % Asian, 13% Caucasian 33% other minority groups
- 64.4 % of families were married, 12.6 % divorced, 9.1 % never married

### Measures

Young adults reported on:

- Overt and covert parental conflict that was combined for an overall parental conflict score (11 items).
  - “How often do your parents insult (show disrespect for) each other?”
- Interpersonal conflict resolution (5-items) included items such as:
  - “How often do disagreements between your parents end in a positive manner?”
- Anger regulation (5 items) and reactivity (3 items) was measured using Zeman’s coping scales.
  - “When I am feeling mad, I control my temper” or “I do things like slam doors when I am mad.”
- Mental health outcomes of the participants were measured using CES-D scale for depressive symptoms and GAD-7 scale for anxiety symptoms.

## Results

Table 1. Correlations between interparental conflict, anger regulation processes and mental health							
	Overt Parental Conflict	Covert Parental Conflict	Parental Conflict Resolution	Anger Regulation Coping	Dysregulated Expression	Anxiety Symptoms	Depressive Symptoms
Overt Parental Conflict	--						
Covert Parental Conflict	.702**	--					
Parental Conflict Resolution	-.590**	-.589**	--				
Anger Regulation	-.075*	-.095**	.201**	--			
Anger Dysregulation	.210**	.215**	-.184**	-.337**	--		
Anxiety Symptoms	.262**	.274**	-.227**	-.180**	.254**	--	
Depressive Symptoms	.290**	.329**	-.321**	-.148**	.258**	.702**	--
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).							
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).							

### Preliminary Analysis

- There was a positive association between interparental conflict indicators and young adult depression and anxiety, while conflict resolution inversely related to these mental health outcomes.
- Interparental conflict was negatively associated to anger regulation and positively associated with reactivity. Conflict resolution was positively related to anger regulation and negatively related to reactivity.
- The regulation of anger was shown to be inversely associated with the mental health outcomes, whereas anger reactivity was positively associated with anxiety and depressive symptoms.

### Plan of Analysis

- First, a theoretical model was tested through path analysis and trimmed according to theory and path coefficient significance and a chi-square difference test was used to determine improvement in model fit.
- Second, the direct and indirect effects were examined including bootstrapping methodology to test for significance of indirect effects.

## Analyses

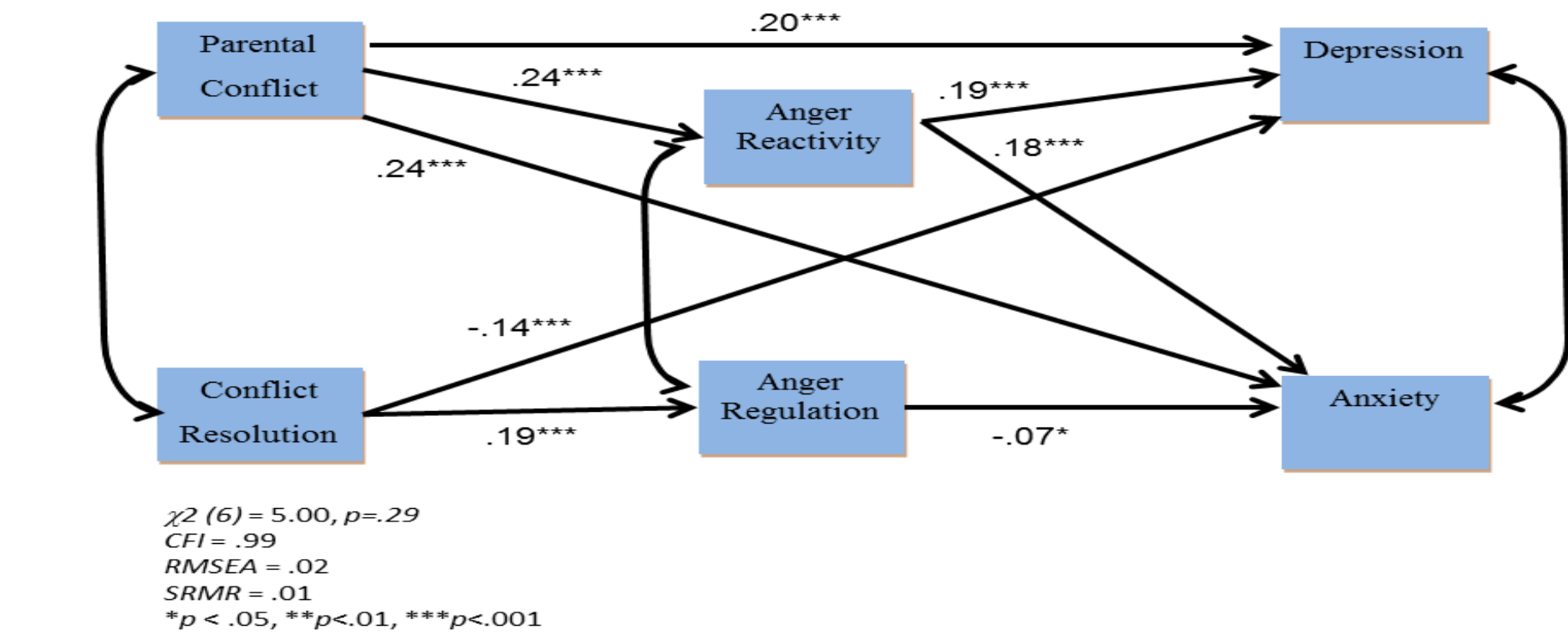


Figure 1. Family System Qualities, Parenting Behaviors, Exposure to Violence and prosocial behavior.

- Parental conflict was positively related to both depression and anxiety symptoms and parental conflict resolution was negatively related to depression.
- Parental conflict was also related to depression and anxiety through a positive relationship with anger reactivity.
- Parental conflict resolution was positively related to anger regulation which in turn was negatively related to anxiety.

Table 2 Bootstrapping Technique of Magnitude and Significance

	Young Adult Anxiety		Young Adult Depression	
	B	95% C.I.	$\beta$	95% C.I.
Parental conflict via anger reactivity	--	--	.05***	[.02, .05]
Parental conflict via anger regulation	-.01*	[-.02, -.01]	--	--

Indirect paths tested with 2,000 bootstraps, Two-tailed, \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ , CI = confidence intervals,  $\beta$  and CI's are standardized

- The confidence intervals for both indirect effects did not contain zero which indicates that these relationships were significant.

## Conclusions

- Interactions in the spousal subsystem may continue to impact mental health indicators in young adulthood.
- Positive interactions around conflict in the spousal subsystem may positively be related to their children’s ability to manage anger in appropriate ways which in turn is related to less anxiety symptoms.
- More negative ways of handling conflict in the spousal subsystem may lead to more anger reactivity which can leave the children vulnerable to more depression and anxiety.
- Intervention and prevention efforts aimed at mental health in young adults in a college setting may benefit from focusing on the family emotional client and individual emotion regulation.

COUNSELOR EDUCATION  
INDIANA UNIVERSITY–PURDUE UNIVERSITY FORT WAYNE  
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND PUBLIC POLICY

